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J. VIROL. vol. 66, no. 3, 1992, pages 1402 - 1408 N. YANAGIDA ET AL. 'Recombinant fowlpox viruses expressing the glycoprotein B homolog and the pp38 gene of Marek's disease virus'

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J.Virol. 62, 4270, 1988

Description

The present invention is concerned with a nucleic acid sequence encoding a Marek's Disease virus polypeptide, a recombinant nucleic acid molecule comprising such a nucleic acid sequence, a vector virus comprising said nucleic acid sequence, a host cell transformed with such a nucleic acid sequence, a Marek's Disease virus polypeptide and antibodies reactive with the polypeptide, as well as a vaccine against Marek's Disease.

Marek's Disease (MD) is a malignant, lympho-proliferative disorder of domestic fowl caused by a herpesvirus: Marek's Disease Virus (MDV). MD is ubiquitous, occurring in poultry-producing countries throughout the world. Chickens raised under intensive production systems will inevitably suffer losses from MD. MD affects chickens from about 6 weeks of age, occurring most frequently between ages of 12 and 24 weeks.

Three forms of MD are recognized clinically, classical MD, acute MD and transient paralysis.

Classical MD is characterized by peripheral nerve enlargement caused by lymphoid infiltration and demyelination, and paralysis is the dominant clinical sign. Mortality is variable but normally under 10-15 per cent.

In the acute form there are multiple and diffuse lymphomatous tumours in the visceral organs. Mortality from this form of MD is usually higher than from the classical form. An incidence of 10-30 per cent is common in unvaccinated flocks and outbreaks involving up to 70% of the flock may be encountered. The pathological lesions in both classical and acute MD are essentially similar, involving the proliferation and infiltration of malignantly transformed T-lymphoblasts into normal tissues, peripheral nerves in the case of the classical form and visceral organs in the case of the acute form.

Furthermore, the MDV has been shown to be responsible for encephalitis of young chickens characterized by sudden paralysis.

Serological classification of MD related viruses yielded three serotypes:

Type I : naturally occurring virulent strains of Marek's disease virus which are pathogenic and tumorigenic to chickens, and attenuated nonpathogenic strains derived thereof

Type II : naturally occurring nonpathogenic strains of Marek's disease virus; and

Type III : herpesvirus of turkeys ("HVT"), which is nonpathogenic to chickens.

Serial passage of pathogenic strains of MDV serotype I was found to result in loss of pathogenicity and oncogenicity, but not of immunogenicity. Attenuated strains derived from HPRS-16 and CVI-988 strains have been applied as vaccines. SB-I and HN-I MDV strains (serotype 2) have also been shown to be useful in vaccination. HVT, first isolated from turkeys, is apathogenic in turkeys and domestic fowls, antigenically related to serotype 1 and 2 MD viruses and extensively used as a vaccine against MD.

There are no methods of treatment of MD and control is based on management methods which isolate growing chickens from sources of infection or disease, the use of genetically resistant stock, and vaccination. However, management procedures are normally not cost-effective and the progress has been disappointing with respect to the selection of poultry stock with increased genetically controlled resistance. Nowadays, control of MD is almost entirely based on vaccination.

Current vaccines comprise chemically inactivated virus vaccines or modified live-virus vaccines. However, inactivated vaccines require additional immunizations, disadvantageously contain adjuvants, are expensive to produce and are laborious to administer. Further, some infectious virus particles may survive the inactivation process and may cause disease after administration to the animal.

In general, attenuated live virus vaccines are preferred because they evoke an immune response often based on both humoral and cellular reactions. Up to now, such vaccines based on MDV serotype I strains could only be prepared by serial passage of virulent strains in tissue culture. However, because of this treatment uncontrolled mutations are introduced into the viral genome, resulting in a population of virus particles heterogeneous with regard to virulence and immunizing properties. Over attenuation during passage in cell culture can also be a problem with these vaccines. One must achieve a delicate balance between ensuring that the vaccine is not virulent while making certain that it is still protective. In addition it is well known that such traditional attenuated live virus vaccines can revert to virulence resulting in disease outbreaks in inoculated animals and the possible spread of the pathogen to other animals. The occurrence of very virulent field strains of MD virus, against which live HVT vaccines provided poor protection, have now been reported and are responsible for excessive losses in various parts of the world. Bivalent vaccines consisting of serotype 2 and serotype 3 strains are reasonably effective against very virulent field isolates in some cases. Multivalent vaccines containing serotype 1 antigens should be even more effective at eliciting immunity against these very virulent strains.

Improved vaccines might be constructed based on recombinant DNA technology. These vaccines would only contain the necessary and relevant MDV immunogenic material which is capable of eliciting a protective immune response against the MDV pathogens, or the genetic information encoding said material, and would not display above-mentioned disadvantages of the live or inactivated vaccines.

5 According to the present invention an isolated and purified nucleic acid sequence encoding a polypeptide having one or more immunogenic determinants of a MDV protein MD06 and having an amino sequence as shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a functional variant thereof is provided which can be applied for the preparation of a vaccine for the immunization of poultry against MDV infection or disease.

10 The gene encoding the MD06 polypeptide maps near the junction of the unique long (UL) region and the internal repeat structural element (IRL) within the MDV genome and encodes a polypeptide of about 290 amino acids in length, corresponding with a calculated molecular weight of 32 kDa.

"Nucleic acid sequence" as used herein refers to a polymeric form of nucleotides of any length, both to ribonucleic acid sequences and to deoxyribonucleic acid sequences. In principle, this term refers to the primary structure of the molecule. Thus, this term includes double and single stranded DNA, as well as 15 double and single stranded RNA, and modifications thereof.

In general, the term "polypeptide" refers to a molecular chain of amino acids with a biological activity, does not refer to a specific length of the product and if required can be modified in vivo or in vitro, for example by glycosylation, amidation, carboxylation or phosphorylation; thus inter alia, peptides, oligopeptides and proteins are included.

20 The term "polypeptide having one or more immunogenic determinants of an MDV protein" refers to a polypeptide having one or more epitopes capable of eliciting an immune response in poultry against MDV infection or disease.

Also included within the scope of the present invention are nucleic acid sequences encoding a functional variant of the polypeptide shown in SEQ ID NO: 2. These functional variants are polypeptides 25 having an amino acid sequence derived from the amino acid sequence specifically disclosed in SEQ ID NO: 2 but retain one or more immunogenic determinants of the MDV protein, i.e. said variants having one or more epitopes capable of eliciting an immune response in poultry against MDV infection or disease.

It will be understood that for the particular polypeptide embraced herein derived from the GA strain of serotype 1, natural variations can exist between individual viruses or strains of Marek's disease viruses. 30 These variations may be demonstrated by (an) amino acid difference(s) in the overall sequence or by deletions, substitutions, insertions, inversions or additions of (an) amino acid(s) in said sequence. Amino acid substitutions from which can be expected that they do not essentially alter biological and immunological activities, have been described. Amino acid replacements between related amino acids or replacements which have occurred frequently in evolution are, inter alia Ser/Ala, Ser/Gly, Asp/Gly, Asp/Asn, 35 Ile/Val (see Dayhof, M.D., Atlas of protein sequence and structure, Nat. Biomed. Res. Found., Washington D.C., 1978, vol. 5, suppl. 3). Based on this information Lipman and Pearson developed a method for rapid and sensitive protein comparison (Science 227, 1435-1441, 1985) and determining the functional similarity between homologous polypeptides. Nucleic acid sequences encoding such homologous functional variants are included within the scope of this invention. Moreover, the potential exists to use recombinant DNA 40 technology for the preparation of nucleic acid sequences encoding these various functional variants.

Nucleic acid sequences according to the invention may be derived from isolates of MDV strains such as GA, JM, HPRS-16, Conn A, RB-IB, CVI-988 or Md 11, the GA strain (Eidson and Schnitte, Avian Diseases 12, 467, 1968) being the most preferred strain.

45 In addition nucleic acid sequences encoding the MD06 polypeptide or functional variants thereof as mentioned above can also be derived from MDV strains belonging to serotype 2 or serotype 3, e.g. HN, HPRS-24, SB-1 or FC126.

The information provided in SEQ ID NO: 1 and 2 allows a person skilled in the art to isolate and identify the nucleic acid sequences encoding the various functional variant polypeptides mentioned-above having corresponding immunological characteristics with the MD06 MDV protein specifically disclosed herein. The 50 generally applied Southern blotting technique or colony hybridization can be used for that purpose (Experiments in Molecular Biology, ed. R.J. Slater, Clifton, U.S.A., 1986; Singer-Sam, J. et al., Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. 80, 802-806, 1983; Maniatis T. et al., Molecular Cloning, A laboratory Manual, second edition, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, USA, 1989). For example, restriction enzyme digested DNA fragments derived from a specific MDV strain is electrophoresed and transferred, or "blotted" thereafter 55 onto a piece of nitrocellulose filter. It is now possible to identify the nucleic sequences encoding the functional variant polypeptides on the filter by hybridization to a defined labelled DNA or "probe" back translated from the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2, under specific conditions of salt concentration and temperature that allow hybridization of the probe to any homologous DNA sequences

present on the filter. After washing the filter, hybridized material may be detected by autoradiography. Once having identified the relevant sequence, DNA fragments that encode a functionally variant polypeptide to the polypeptide disclosed in SEQ ID NO: 2 can now be recovered after agarose gel electrophoresis.

In another way MDV cDNA may be cloned into a λ gt11 phage as described by Huynh et al. (In: D. Glover (ed.), DNA Cloning: A Practical Approach, IRL Press Oxford, 49-78, 1985) and expressed into a bacterial host. Recombinant phages can then be screened with polyclonal serum raised against the purified MD06 MDV protein disclosed in SEQ ID NO:2, determining the presence of corresponding immunological regions of the variant polypeptide. Above mentioned procedure is outlined in detail in Example 1. The production of the polyclonal serum to be used herein elicited against the MD06 MDV protein is described below.

A nucleic acid sequence according to the invention may be isolated from a particular MDV strain and multiplied by recombinant DNA techniques including polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technology or may be chemically synthesized in vitro by techniques known in the art.

A preferred nucleic acid sequence according to the invention is characterized in that said sequence contains at least part of the DNA sequence disclosed in SEQ ID NO:1.

As is well known in the art, the degeneracy of the genetic code permits substitution of bases in a codon resulting in an other codon but still coding for the same amino acid, e.g. the codon for the amino acid glutamic acid is both GAT and GAA. Consequently, it is clear that for the expression of a polypeptide with the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2 use can be made of a variant nucleic acid sequence with such an alternative codon composition different from the nucleic acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:1.

Furthermore, also fragments of the nucleic acid sequences encoding the specifically disclosed MD06 MDV protein or functional variants thereof as mentioned above are included in the present invention.

The term "fragment" as used herein means a DNA or amino acid sequence comprising a subsequence of the nucleic acid sequence or polypeptide of the invention. Said fragment is or encodes a polypeptide having one or more immunogenic determinants of the MD06 MDV protein, i.e. has one or more epitopes of the MD06 protein which are capable of eliciting an immune response in poultry. Methods for determining usable polypeptide fragments are outlined below. Fragments can inter alia be produced by enzymatic cleavage of precursor molecules, using restriction endonucleases for the DNA and proteases for the polypeptides. Other methods include chemical synthesis of the fragments or the expression of polypeptide fragments by DNA fragments.

All modifications resulting in the abovementioned functional variants of the specifically exemplified polypeptide are included within the scope of the present invention for as long as the resulting polypeptides retain one or more immunogenic determinants of the MD06 MDV protein.

A nucleic acid sequence according to the present invention can be ligated to various replication effecting DNA sequences with which it is not associated or linked in nature resulting in a so called recombinant vector molecule which can be used for the transformation of a suitable host. Useful recombinant vector molecules, are preferably derived from, for example plasmids, bacteriophages, cosmids or viruses.

Specific vectors or cloning vehicles which can be used to clone nucleic acid sequences according to the invention are known in the art and include inter alia plasmid vectors such as pBR322, the various pUC, pGEM and Bluescript plasmids, bacteriophages, e.g. λ gt-Wes- λ B, Charon 28 and the M13 derived phages or viral vectors such as SV40, adenovirus or polyoma virus (see also Rodriguez, R.L. and D.T. Denhardt, ed., Vectors: A survey of molecular cloning vectors and their uses, Butterworths, 1988; Lenstra, J.A. et al., Arch. Virol. 110, 1-24, 1990). The methods to be used for the construction of a recombinant vector molecule according to the invention are known to those of ordinary skill in the art and are inter alia set forth in Maniatis, T. et al. (Molecular Cloning A Laboratory Manual, second edition; Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, 1989).

For example, the insertion of the nucleic acid sequence according to the invention into a cloning vector can easily be achieved when both the genes and the desired cloning vehicle have been cut with the same restriction enzyme(s) as complementary DNA termini are thereby produced.

Alternatively, it may be necessary to modify the restriction sites that are produced into blunt ends either by digesting the single-stranded DNA or by filling in the single-stranded termini with an appropriate DNA polymerase. Subsequently, blunt end ligation with an enzyme such as T4 DNA ligase may be carried out.

If desired, any restriction site may be produced by ligating linkers onto the DNA termini. Such linkers may comprise specific oligonucleotide sequences that encode restriction site sequences. The restriction enzyme cleaved vector and nucleic acid sequence may also be modified by homopolymeric tailing.

"Transformation", as used herein, refers to the introduction of a heterologous nucleic acid sequence into a host cell, irrespective of the method used, for example direct uptake or transduction. The heterolo-

gous nucleic acid sequence may be maintained through autonomous replication or alternatively, may be integrated into the host genome. If desired, the recombinant vector molecules are provided with appropriate control sequences compatible with the designated host which can regulate the expression of the inserted nucleic acid sequence. In addition to microorganisms, culture of cells derived from multicellular organisms may also be used as hosts.

The recombinant vector molecules according to the invention preferably contain one or more marker activities that may be used to select for desired transformants, such as ampicillin and tetracycline resistance in pBR322, ampicillin resistance and β -galactosidase activity in pUC8.

A suitable host cell is a pro- or eukaryotic cell which can be transformed by a nucleic acid sequence encoding a polypeptide or by a recombinant vector molecule comprising such a nucleic acid sequence and which can if desired be used to express said polypeptide encoded by said nucleic acid sequence. The host cell can be of prokaryotic origin, e.g. bacteria such as *Escherichia coli*, *Bacillus subtilis* and *Pseudomonas* species; or of eukaryotic origin such as yeasts, e.g. *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* or higher eukaryotic cells such as insect, plant or mammalian cells, including HeLa cells and Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells. Insect cells include the Sf9 cell line of *Spodoptera frugiperda* (Luckow et al., *Bio-technology* 6, 47-55, 1988). Information with respect to the cloning and expression of the nucleic acid sequence of the present invention in eukaryotic cloning systems can be found in Esser, K. et al. (*Plasmids of Eukaryotes*, Springer-Verlag, 1986).

In general, prokaryotes are preferred for cloning of DNA sequences in constructing the vectors useful in the invention. For example *E. coli* K12 and derivative strains such as DH5 α or JM101 are particularly useful.

For expression, nucleic acid sequences of the present invention are introduced into an expression vector, i.e. said sequences are operably linked to expression control sequences. Such control sequences may comprise promoters, enhancers, operators, inducers, ribosome binding sites etc. Therefore, the present invention provides a recombinant vector molecule comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding the MD06 MDV protein operably linked to expression control sequences, capable of expressing the DNA sequences contained therein in (a) transformed host cell(s).

It should, of course, be understood that the nucleotide sequences inserted at the selected site of the cloning vector may include nucleotides which are not part of the actual structural gene for the desired polypeptide or may include only a fragment of the complete structural gene for the desired protein as long as transformed host will produce a polypeptide having at least one or more immunogenic determinants of the MD06 MDV protein.

When the host cells are bacteria, illustrative useful expression control sequences include the Trp promoter and operator (Goeddel, et al., *Nucl. Acids Res.* 8, 4057, 1980); the lac promoter and operator (Chang, et al., *Nature* 275, 615, 1978); the outer membrane protein promoter (Nakamura, K. and Inouge, M., *EMBO J.* 1, 771-775, 1982); the bacteriophage λ promoters and operators (Remaut, E. et al., *Nucl. Acids Res.* 11, 4677-4688, 1983); the α -amylase (*B. subtilis*) promoter and operator, termination sequence and other expression enhancement and control sequences compatible with the selected host cell. When the host cell is yeast, illustrative useful expression control sequences include, e.g., α -mating factor. For insect cells the polyhedrin or p10 promoters of baculoviruses can be used (Smith, G.E. et al., *Mol. Cell. Biol.* 3, 2156-65, 1983). When the host cell is of mammalian origin illustrative useful expression control sequences include, e.g., the SV40 promoter (Berman, P.W. et al., *Science* 222, 524-527, 1983) or, e.g. the metallothionein promoter (Brinster, R.L., *Nature* 296, 39-42, 1982) or a heat shock promoter (Voellmy et al., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 82, 4949-53, 1985). Alternatively, also expression control sequences present in MDV, in particular those regulating the expression of the MD06 protein may be applied. For maximizing gene expression, see also Roberts and Lauer (*Methods in Enzymology* 68, 473, 1979).

Therefore, the invention also comprises (a) host cell(s) transformed with a nucleic acid sequence or recombinant expression vector molecule described above, capable of producing the MD06 MDV protein by expression of the nucleic acid sequence.

The present invention also provides a purified polypeptide having one or more immunogenic determinants of a MD06 MDV protein having an amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2, or a functional variant thereof, essentially free from the whole virus or other protein with which it is ordinarily associated.

It will be understood that derivatives of said amino acid sequences displaying the same immunological properties in essence, i.e. functional variants, are also within the scope of the present invention.

Functional variants of the MD06 polypeptide disclosed herein include the corresponding polypeptides present in viruses of other strains of MD serotype 1 (or in viruses of strains belonging to serotype 2 or 3). Said equivalents can be produced through the expression of the genes encoding said equivalents, the genes being identified and isolated making use of the information provided herein as described above.

In addition a polypeptide which can be used for immunization of poultry against MDV infection or disease or for diagnostic purposes substantially comprising an immunogenic fragment of the MD06 MDV protein is included in the present invention. Various methods are known for detecting such usable polypeptide fragments within a amino acid sequence.

5 Suitable immunochemically active immunogenic fragments of a polypeptide according to the invention containing (an) epitope(s) can be found by means of the method described in Patent Application WO 86/06487, Geysen, H.M. et al. (Prod. Natl. Acad. Sci. 81, 3998-4002, 1984), Geysen, H.M. et al. (J. Immunol. Meth. 102, 259-274, 1987) based on the so-called pep-scan method, wherein a series of partially overlapping polypeptides corresponding with partial sequences of the complete polypeptide under consideration, are synthesized and their reactivity with antibodies is investigated.

10 In addition, a number of regions of the polypeptide, with the stated amino acid sequence, can be designated epitopes on the basis of theoretical considerations and structural agreement with epitopes which are now known. The determination of these regions is based on a combination of the hydrophilicity criteria according to Hopp and Woods (Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. 78, 3824-3828, 1981) and the secondary structure aspects according to Chou and Fasman (Advances in Enzymology 47, 45-148, 1987).

15 T-cell epitopes which may be necessary can likewise be derived on theoretical grounds with the aid of Berzofsky's amphiphilicity criterion (Science 235, 1059-62, 1987).

In another embodiment of the invention a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence encoded by a nucleic acid sequence mentioned above is used.

20 Immunization of poultry against MDV infection or disease can, for example be achieved by administering to the animals a polypeptide according to the invention in an immunologically relevant context as a so-called subunit vaccine. The subunit vaccine according to the invention may comprise a polypeptide in a pure form, optionally in the presence of a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier. The polypeptide can optionally be covalently bonded to a non-related protein, which, for example can be of advantage in the purification of the fusion product. Examples are β -galactosidase, protein A, prochymosine, blood clotting factor Xa, etc.

25 In some cases the ability to raise neutralizing antibodies against these polypeptides per se may be low. Small fragments are preferably conjugated to carrier molecules in order to raise their immunogenicity. Suitable carriers for this purpose are macromolecules, such as natural polymers (proteins like key hole limpet haemocyanin, albumin, toxins), synthetic polymers like polyamino acids (polylysine, polyalanine), or micelles of amphiphilic compounds like saponins. Alternatively these fragments may be provided as polymers thereof, preferably linear polymers.

Polypeptides to be used in such subunit vaccines can be prepared by methods known in the art, e.g. by isolating said polypeptides from MDV, by recombinant DNA techniques or by chemical synthesis.

35 If required the polypeptides according to the invention to be used in a vaccine can be modified in vitro or in vivo, for example by glycosylation, amidation, carboxylation or phosphorylation.

An alternative to subunit vaccines are live vector vaccines. A nucleic acid sequence according to the invention is introduced by recombinant DNA techniques into a micro-organism (e.g. a bacterium or virus) in such a way that the recombinant micro-organism is still able to replicate thereby expressing a polypeptide coded by the inserted nucleic acid sequence and eliciting an immune response in the infected host animal.

40 A preferred embodiment of the present invention is a recombinant vector virus comprising a heterologous nucleic acid sequence described above, capable of expressing the DNA sequence in (a) host cell(s) or host animal infected with the recombinant vector virus. The term "heterologous" indicates that the nucleic acid sequence according to the invention is not normally present in nature in the vector virus or is not present in the same genetic context as in the naturally occurring vector virus.

45 Furthermore, the invention also comprises (a) host cell(s) or cell culture infected with the recombinant vector virus, capable of producing the MDV protein by expression of the nucleic acid sequence.

The well known technique of in vivo homologous recombination can be used to introduce a heterologous nucleic acid sequence, e.g. a nucleic acid sequence according to the invention into the genome of the vector virus.

50 First, a DNA fragment corresponding with an insertion region of the vector genome, i.e. a region which can be used for the incorporation of a heterologous sequence without disrupting essential functions of the vector such as those necessary for infection or replication, is inserted into a cloning vector according to standard recDNA techniques. Insertion-regions have been reported for a large number of micro-organisms (e.g. EP 80,806, EP 110,385, EP 83,286, EP 314,569, WO 88/02022 and WO88/07088).

55 Second, if desired, a deletion can be introduced into the insertion region present in the recombinant vector molecule obtained from the first step. This can be achieved for example by appropriate exonuclease III digestion or restriction enzyme treatment of the recombinant vector molecule from the first step.

Third, the heterologous nucleic acid sequence is inserted into the insertion-region present in the recombinant vector molecule of the first step or in place of the DNA deleted from said recombinant vector molecule. The insertion region DNA sequence should be of appropriate length as to allow homologous recombination with the vector genome to occur. Thereafter, suitable cells can be infected with wild-type
 5 vector virus or transformed with vector genomic DNA in the presence of the recombinant vector molecule containing the insertion flanked by appropriate vector DNA sequences whereby recombination occurs between the corresponding regions in the recombinant vector molecule and the vector genome. Recombinant vector progeny can now be produced in cell culture and can be selected for example genotypically or phenotypically, e.g. by hybridization, detecting enzyme activity encoded by a gene co-integrated along
 10 with the heterologous nucleic acid sequence, or detecting the antigenic heterologous polypeptide expressed by the recombinant vector immunologically.

Next, this recombinant micro-organism can be administered to the host animal for immunization after which it maintains itself for some time, or even replicates in the body of the inoculated animal, expressing in vivo a polypeptide coded for by the inserted nucleic acid sequence according to the invention resulting in
 15 the stimulation of the immune system of the inoculated animal. Suitable vectors for the incorporation of a nucleic acid sequence according to the invention can be derived from viruses such as (avian) poxviruses, e.g. vaccinia virus or fowl poxvirus (EP 314,569 and WO 88/02022), herpesviruses, for example vaccine strains of Marek's Disease viruses such as HVT (WO 88/07088) or MDV strains of serotype 1 or 2, adenovirus or influenzavirus, or bacteria such as E. coli or specific Salmonella species. These vectors can
 20 be designed in a way to obtain an efficient recognition of the polypeptide by the immune system of the host animal. In this context fusion of the said polypeptide with synthetic signal and anchor sequences or with an antigen from another viral or bacterial pathogen, e.g. the haemagglutinin-neuraminidase protein form Newcastle disease virus, are conceivable. It is also possible that the said immunogenic polypeptide, if desired as part of a larger whole, is released inside the animal to be immunized. In all of these cases it is
 25 also possible that one or more immunogenic products will find expression which generate protection against various pathogens and/or against various antigens of a given pathogen.

A vaccine according to the invention can be prepared by culturing a host cell infected with a recombinant vector virus comprising a nucleic acid sequence according to the invention, after which virus containing cells and/or recombinant vector viruses grown in the cells can be collected, optionally in a pure
 30 form. Another possibility to produce a vector vaccin is to incorporate a nucleic acid sequence according to the invention in an infectious bacteria or parasite and to culture such a modified infectious agent. After collection, optionally in a pure form, a vaccine, optionally in a lyophilized form, can be produced

Host cells transformed with a recombinant vector molecule according to the invention can also be cultured under conditions which are favourable for the expression of a polypeptide coded by said nucleic acid sequence. Vaccines may be prepared using samples of the crude culture, host cell lysates or host cell
 35 extracts, although in another embodiment more purified polypeptides according to the invention are formed to a vaccine, depending on its intended use. In order to purify the polypeptides produced, host cells transformed with a recombinant vector according to the invention are cultured in an adequate volume and the polypeptides produced are isolated from such cells or from the medium if the protein is excreted.
 40 Polypeptides excreted into the medium can be isolated and purified by standard techniques, e.g. salt fractionation, centrifugation, ultrafiltration, chromatography, gel filtration or immuno affinity chromatography, whereas inter cellular polypeptides can be isolated by first collecting said cells, disrupting the cells, for example by sonication or by other mechanically disruptive means such as French press followed by separation of the polypeptides from the other inter cellular components and forming the polypeptides to a
 45 vaccine. Cell disruption could also be accomplished by chemical (e.g. EDTA treatment) or enzymatic means such as lysozyme digestion.

Antibodies or antiserum directed against a polypeptide according to the invention have potential use in passive immunotherapy, diagnostic immunoassays and generation of anti-idiotypic antibodies.

The MD06 MDV protein as characterized above can be used to produce antibodies, both polyclonal, monospecific and monoclonal. If polyclonal antibodies are desired, techniques for producing and processing polyclonal sera are known in the art (e.g. Mayer and Walter, eds, Immunochemical Methods in Cell and
 50 Molecular Biology, Academic Press, London, 1987). In short, a selected mammal, e.g. rabbit is given (multiple) injections with above-mentioned immunogen, about 20 µg to about 80 µg of protein per immunization. Immunization are given with an acceptable adjuvant, generally equal volumes of immunogen and adjuvant. Acceptable adjuvants include Freund's complete, Freund's incomplete, alum-precipitate or
 55 water-in-oil emulsions, with Freund's complete adjuvant being preferred for the initial immunization. Freund's incomplete adjuvant is preferred for all booster immunizations. The initial immunization consists of the administration of about 1 ml of emulsion at multiple subcutaneous sites on the backs of the rabbits.

Booster immunizations utilizing an equal volume of immunogen are given at about one month intervals and are continued until adequate levels of antibodies are present in an individual rabbits serum. Blood is collected and serum isolated by methods known in the art.

Monospecific antibodies to the immunogen are affinity purified from polyspecific antisera by a modification of the method of Hall et al. (*Nature* 311, 379-387 1984), prepared by immunizing rabbits as described above with the purified protein. Monospecific antibody as used herein is defined as a single antibody species or multiple antibody species with homogeneous binding characteristics for the relevant antigen. Homogeneous binding as used herein refers to the ability of the antibody species to bind to a specific antigen or epitope.

Monoclonal antibody reactive against the MD06 MDV immunogen can be prepared by immunizing inbred mice, preferably Balb/c with the appropriate protein. The mice are immunized intraperitoneally with about 100 ng to about 10 μ g immunogen per 0.5 ml dosis in an equal volume of an acceptable adjuvant. Such acceptable adjuvants include Freund's complete, Freund's incomplete, alum-precipitate and water-in-oil emulsions. The mice are given intravenous booster immunizations of an equal amount of the immunogen without adjuvant at about days 14, 21 and 63 post primary immunization. At about day three after the final booster immunization individual mice are serologically tested for anti-immunogen antibodies. Spleen cells from antibody producing mice are isolated and fused with murine myeloma cells, such as SP-2/0 or the like, by techniques known in the art (Kohler and Milstein, *Nature* 256; 495-497, 1975). Hybridoma cells are selected by growth in hypoxanthine, thymidine and aminopterin in an appropriate cell culture medium such as Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (DMEM). Antibody producing hybridomas are cloned, preferably using the soft agar technique of MacPherson, (*Soft Agar Techniques, Tissue Culture Methods and Applications*, Kruse and Paterson, eds., Academic Press, 276, 1973), Discrete colonies are transferred into individual wells of culture plates for cultivation in an appropriate culture medium. Antibody producing cells are identified by screening with the appropriate immunogen. Immunogen positive hybridoma cells are maintained by techniques known in the art. Specific anti-monoclonal antibodies are produced by cultivating the hybridomas in vitro or preparing ascites fluid in mice following hybridoma injection by procedures known in the art.

Anti-idiotypic antibodies are immunoglobulins which carry an "internal image" of the antigen of the pathogen against which protection is desired and can be used as an immunogen in a vaccine (Dreesman et al., *J. Infect. Disease* 151, 761, 1985). Techniques for raising anti-idiotypic antibodies are known in the art (MacNamara et al., *Science* 226, 1325, 1984).

The vaccine according to the invention can be administered in a conventional active immunization scheme: single or repeated administration in a manner compatible with the dosage formulation and in such amount as will be prophylactically and/or therapeutically effective and immunogenic, i.e. the amount of immunizing antigen or recombinant micro-organism capable of expressing said antigen that will induce immunity in an animal against challenge by a virulent MDV. Immunity is defined as the induction of a higher level of protection in a population of animals after vaccination compared to an unvaccinated group.

For live viral vector vaccines the dose rate per animal may range from 1.10^2 - 1.10^6 infectivity units.

A typical subunit vaccine according to the invention comprises 10 μ g - 1 mg of the polypeptide according to the invention.

The administration of the vaccine can be done, e.g. intradermally, subcutaneously, intramuscularly, intraperitoneally, intravenously, orally or intranasally.

Additionally the vaccine may also contain an aqueous medium or a water containing suspension, often mixed with other constituents, e.g. in order to increase the activity and/or shelf life. These constituents may be salts, pH buffers, stabilizers (such as skimmed milk or casein hydrolysate), emulsifiers adjuvants to improve the immune response (e.g. oils, muramyl dipeptide, aluminiumhydroxide, saponin, polyanions and amphipatic substances) and preservatives.

It is clear that a vaccine according to the invention may also contain immunogens related to other pathogens of poultry or may contain nucleic acid sequences encoding these immunogens, like antigens of Infectious Bronchitis Virus (IBV), Newcastle Disease Virus (NDV), Infectious Bursal Disease Virus (IBDV) or Marek's Disease Virus different from those disclosed herein, to produce a multivalent vaccine.

The invention also relates to an "immunochemical reagent", which reagent comprises a polypeptide according to the invention.

The term "immunochemical reagent" signifies that the polypeptide according to the invention is bound to a suitable support or is provided with a labelling substance.

The supports which can be used are, for example, the inner wall of a microtest well or a cuvette, a tube or capillary, a membrane, filter, test strip or the surface of a particle such as, for example, a latex particle, an erythrocyte, a dye sol, a metal sol or metal compound as sol particle.

Labelling substances which can be used are, inter alia, a radioactive isotope, a fluorescent compound, an enzyme, a dye sol, metal sol or metal compound as sol particle.

A nucleic acid sequence according to the invention can also be used to design specific probes for hybridization experiments for the detection of MDV related nucleic acids in any kind of tissue.

5 The present invention also provides a test kit comprising said nucleic acid sequence useful for the diagnosis of MDV infection or disease.

The invention also relates to a test kit to be used in an immuno-assay, this test kit containing at least one immunochemical reagent according to the invention.

10 The immunochemical reaction which takes place using this test kit is preferably a sandwich reaction, an agglutination reaction, a competition reaction or an inhibition reaction.

For carrying out a sandwich reaction, the test kit can consist, for example, of a polypeptide according to the invention bound to a solid support, for example the inner wall of a microtest well, and either a labelled polypeptide according to the invention or a labelled anti-antibody.

15 Example 1

Screening of bacterial expression libraries with convalescent chicken serum

20 The vectors used for establishment of the library have been λ gt11 (Young, R.A. and Davis, R.W. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. 80, 1194-1198, 1983) and λ EMBL-3. The genome of the λ gt11 expression vector contains a functional LacZ gene encoding the enzyme β -galactosidase with a unique EcoRI restriction site near the carboxy terminus. Insertion of DNA fragments from the MDV genome at this site, potentially results in the expression of a protein consisting of an MDV specific polypeptide fused to a major part of the β -galactosidase. Libraries representing a complex range of DNA fragments can be screened at high density
25 for recombinant clones producing a fusion protein which is recognized by an antibody probe such as the serum from MDV infected birds.

A library representing the genome of MDV strain GA consisted of about 100 independent λ EMBL-3 recombinants containing an average insert size of about 18 kbp. These recombinants were selected by hybridizing a phage library, representing the total DNA content of MDV strain GA infected chicken embryo fibroblasts (CEF), with a probe consisting of a pool of BamHI plasmid clones containing MDV specific
30 sequences (Fukuchi et al., J. Virol. 51, 102, 1984). DNA from the amplified GA-specific EMBL-3 library was fragmented by partial digestion with a mixture of the restriction enzymes AluI, RsaI and HaeIII. Fragments with a size between 0.5 and 4.0 kb were isolated, tailed with dG-residues and inserted by means of a synthetic adaptor into the unique EcoRI-site of the λ gt10 vector (Le Bouc et al., FEBS Lett. 196, 108, 1986; Huynh et al., in: Cloning Techniques, A Practical Approach, ed. Glover, D., 49-78, 1985) resulting in a library
35 with an effective size of 4×10^4 pfu. Phages were amplified and purified on CsCl-gradients, DNA was extracted and inserts were recovered by restriction with EcoRI. Finally, these inserts were ligated into the EcoRI-site of the λ gt11 vector and recombinant phages were screened with chicken serum against MDV.

40 This convalescent serum was obtained by infecting single-comb white leghorns (SPAFAS) with a virulent passage of the GA strain from MDV obtained from Dr. Calnek (Cornell University, NY, USA). Serum was collected over a 12 weeks period and samples were tested individually by indirect fluorescence for binding to MDV plaques in tissue cultures of chicken embryo fibroblasts (CEF).

Six of the sera were selected based on titre and specificity. A mixture of these samples was used in a 1:100 dilution to screen the λ gt11 library on nitro-cellulose filters according to Young, R.A. et al. (Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 82, 2583, 1985). The second antibody for incubation of the filters was an alkaline phosphatase conjugated rabbit-anti-chicken serum (Sigma, St. Louis, USA) and positive signals were developed by the nitro blue tetrazolium/5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolyl phosphate colour reaction (McGadey, Histochemie 23, 180, 1970). Series of candidates were selected and recombinants were plaque-purified until
45 homogeneity.

50 A major group among these λ gt11 candidates contained inserted sequences with strong similarities based on cross-hybridization experiments. One of them was selected and the DNA insert of about 500 bp was transferred to pGEM3Z (Promega, Madison, USA) resulting in plasmid pMD06.

Example 2Cloning and structural analysis of the gene encoding the MD06 antigen.

5 The previously established MDV strain GA-specific EMBL-3 library was screened on replica filters using the labelled insert from pMD06 as a probe. Positive signals were selected, plaque purified and DNA was extracted from amplified phage preparations. One of the candidates, designated λ GA08, was analyzed by restriction mapping and southern blot hybridization using the labelled insert from pMD06 as a probe. Strong hybridization was obtained to a 5.0 kb *Sall* fragment present in the 17 kb insert of λ GA08. Subcloning of this particular fragment in pGEM3Z resulted in pMD11, the restriction map of which is shown in Figure 1. Relevant fragments from pMD11 were obtained by subcloning two *Pst*I fragments of 3.3 and 0.9 kb in pGEM5Z resulting in pMD23 and pMD24 respectively. Nucleotide sequence analysis was performed in the region of the 0.9 kb *Eco*RI restriction fragment shown in Figure 1.

Both strands were analyzed based on progressively deleted subclones generated by exonuclease III treatment as described by Henikoff (Gene 28, 357, 1984) on either plasmid pMD11 or pMD23. All reactions were performed on double stranded DNA preparations using a T7 polymerase sequencing kit (Pharmacia Inc., Piscataway, NJ). Gel readings were assembled using the shotgun handler from a Gene-Master workstation (Bio-Rad, Richmond, CA). The result of this analysis is shown in SEQ ID:1 and revealed an open reading frame of 830 nucleotides essentially encoding the MD06 antigen of about 290 amino acids of which the primary structure is shown in SEQ ID:2.

Example 3

25 Expression of antigen MD06 as a fusion polypeptide with the haemagglutinin-neuramidase (HN) protein from Newcastle disease virus (NDV) using herpesvirus of turkey (HVT) as a live viral vector.

The expression of the antigen in a vector organism can be envisaged such that exposure on the cell surface increases the efficiency with which the host immune system recognizes the relevant antigenic epitopes. An example of such a carrier protein is HN from NDV. The gene encoding this protein can be inserted in the genome of an avian viral vector e.g. HVT, in such a way that HN is efficiently synthesized after infection of a cell with the recombinant virus. The DNA fragment encoding a substantial part of MD06 is subsequently integrated at a suitable position within the coding region for HN such that the proper orientation and reading frame is respected. The fusion polypeptide now synthesized by the infected cell can be directed to the outer surface and correctly anchored in the plasma membrane through the amino terminal sequence of HN.

A. Vector plasmid mediating the integration of genes into the genome of HVT.
Based on the genome structure of HVT as published by Igarashi, T. et al. (Virology 157, 351, 1987) a region in the unique-short sequence element (Us) of the virus was selected for the insertion of foreign genes. The corresponding DNA fragment was screened from a λ EMBL3 library constructed by partially digesting total DNA from HVT infected CEF. The insert of one of the λ -isolates, characterized by the absence of any *Bam*HI restriction site, was denominated λ HVT04. The sequence present in the 17.5 kb inserted fragment represented a major part of the Us region including part of the inverted repeat structure (Igarashi, T. et al., 1987, *ibid*). One of the 1.2 kb *Xho*I restriction fragments from λ HVT04 was subcloned in pGEM3Z digested with *Sal*I resulting in plasmid pMD07 which contained a unique *Bgl*II site available for insertion of DNA fragments (FIG. 2). A strong promoter which could direct the expression of foreign genes after their insertion into the genome of the HVT virus was selected from the LTR sequence of Rous Sarcoma Virus (RSV). The promoter has been mapped on a 580 bp *Nde*I/*Hind*III restriction fragment from pRSVcat (Gorman et al., Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. 79, 6777, 1982) and was inserted between the *Hind*III and *Pst*I sites of pGEM3Z (Promega) by means of double stranded synthetic linkers on both sides of the fragment. The connection between the *Hind*III site from the vector pGEM3Z and the *Nde*I site of the RSV fragment carrying the LTR-promoter was made with a 30 bp linker containing cohesive ends compatible with *Hind*III on one and *Nde*I on the other site. However, after ligation both restriction sites are not restored due to deliberate modifications in the outer nucleotides of the six basepair recognition sequence. In addition to the removal of these two sites, a new restriction site (*Bam*HI) present within the linker itself was created at the corresponding position. A second 20 bp linker was synthesized which connected the *Hind*III site from the LTR fragment to the *Pst*I site from pGEM3Z, in this case without destruction of the recognition sequence on either of the ends and adding the three convenient unique restriction sites *Bgl*II, *Xho*I and *Eco*RV, to those already present in the polylinker of

pGEM3Z, e.g. PstI, Sall, XhoI and BamHI. The resulting derivative of pGEM3Z, designated pVEC01, therefore contains a 650 bp restriction fragment carrying the LTR promoter sequence immediately followed by seven restriction sites available for the insertion of foreign genes. The 650 bp fragment is flanked on either end by a BamHI restriction site and has been transferred as such to the unique BglII site present in the 1,2 kb HVT insert from pMD07. The cohesive ends generated by these two restriction enzymes are compatible but ligation does not restore either of the original recognition sequences for BglII or BamHI. One of the resulting constructs, carrying the LTR in the orientation towards the TRs, was designated pVECO4 and checked by restriction mapping (Figure 3). The structure of this universal HVT recombination vector allows the insertion of foreign genes immediately downstream of the LTR promoter and subsequent integration of the complete expression cassette into the HVT genome by in vivo recombination. The positions of the different restriction sites downstream of the LTR in particular those for the enzymes BglII, XhoI and EcoRV are designed in such a way that even multiple gene insertion can be envisaged.

B. Insertion of the HN-gene from MDV into pVEC04.

The gene encoding HN was isolated from a cDNA library of NDV strain Clone 30 (Intervet Int., Holland). Genomic RNA was prepared from virus grown on embryonated eggs and first strand cDNA synthesis was performed with reverse transcriptase using a random 10-base oligomer to prime the reaction. The DNA fragment flanked by BamHI restriction sites and encoding the complete HN protein was cloned in pGEM4Z (Promega, Madison, USA) and the resulting plasmid was designated pNDV03. Subsequent transfer of the 2.1 kb BamHI fragment into the BglII site of the recombination vector pVEC04 resulted in pNDV05. Correct orientation of the inserted gene relative to the LTR promoter was verified by restriction analysis based on the physical map as shown in Figure 4.

C. Construction of a fusion between the gene encoding MDV antigen MD06 and the HN from NDV.

Examination of the sequence of the coding region from HN reveals that the GAA-codon of the EcoRI restriction site present in the 3' terminal part of the gene has the same reading frame as the second codon of the gene encoding MD06 as shown in SEQ ID:1. Correctly orientated integration of a 0.9 kb EcoRI fragment derived from pMD11 or pMD23 at the relevant EcoRI restriction site in pNDV05 results in synthesis of a polypeptide comprising almost the entire HN protein fused to the complete MD06 antigen. This particular plasmid construction derived from pNDV05 is designated pNDV10 and the restriction map is shown in Figure 5. Additional integration of a marker gene can be envisaged at the EcoRV site present at the 3' end of the gene encoding the fusion polypeptide. The presence of a marker gene such as the lacZ gene from E. coli facilitates the detection of recombinant HVT virus expressing both β -galactosidase activity and the fusion polypeptide of interest.

D. Insertion of genes into the genome of HVT.

DNA from plasmid pNDV10 is introduced together with total DNA prepared from HVT infected cells into CEF by a method based on the calcium phosphate DNA precipitation according to Graham and v.d. Eb (Virology 52, 456, 1973) with modifications described by Morgan et al. (Avian Diseases 34, 345, 1990). Two micrograms of plasmid DNA from the constructs are mixed with 15 μ g of DNA from HVT infected cells in a final volume of 560 μ l H₂O and added to 750 μ l of HBSP (20 mM KCl, 560 mM NaCl, 24 mM glucose, 3 mM Na₂HPO₄, 100 mM HEPES, pH 7.0). Precipitates are formed by gradually adding 190 μ l of 1M CaCl₂ solution and incubating the mixtures at room-temperature for 30 minutes. In the meantime, 15 ml of a suspension of secondary CEF from 10 day old embryos in medium 6/B8, for which the composition is based on Glasgow's modification of Eagle's Minimal Essential Medium supplemented with 2% of foetal calf serum, were seeded in 80 cm² dishes at a density of 5 x 10⁵ cells per ml. Calcium phosphate precipitated DNA is gently added to the cell suspension and dishes are incubated at 37 °C in a humidified incubator containing 5% CO₂ in air. After 5 hours, medium is removed and 10 ml of solution containing equal volumes of HBSP and 30% glycerol is layered onto the cells. After a one to two minute incubation, the solution is removed, cells are washed with medium 6/B8 and dishes are incubated with fresh medium for 3 to 5 days until viral CPE develops. Detection of HVT recombinants expressing the MD06 antigen fused to the HN of NDV is done by immunofluorescence staining using specific mono- or polyvalent sera against the MDV antigens or the HN protein from NDV.

Example 4

Expression of the native MD06 antigen in HVT

Expression of antigen MD06 as a non-fused polypeptide is achieved by integration of the complete gene of SEQ ID: 1 including 5' non-translated sequences, downstream of the LTR promoter as present in

plasmid pVEC04 (described in Figure 3 and Example 3, section A) and subsequent insertion of the expression cassette via in-vivo recombination into the genome of the HVT vector virus. For this purpose the gene was isolated on a DNA fragment derived from pMD23 (see Example 2) by PCR amplification with synthetic primers positioned 60 bp upstream of the ATG-initiator and 40 bp downstream of the TAA-terminator (SEQ ID: 1). The presence of a newly created GGATCC sequence in both primers enabled the isolation of a 1.0 kb BamHI restriction fragment which was subcloned into the BamHI site of plasmid pGEM3Z resulting in pMD56. After confirming the correct sequence structure of the insert, the fragment was reisolated by digestion with BamHI and subsequently inserted into the BglII restriction site of pVEC04 thereby resulting in pMD58 (Figure 6). Following steps towards the integration into the HVT genome of the gene encoding a native MD06 antigen under control of the LTR promotor, were done as described in Example 3, section D. Recombinant HVT virus expressing MD06 antigen was detected by means of immunofluorescence staining on infected CEF using polyvalent sera specifically raised against E.coli expressed fragments of MD06. Recombinants were purified to homogeneity by limiting dilution procedures and repeated single plaque isolation.

Legends

Figure 1

Restriction enzyme map of pMD11 with the position of the 0.9 Kb EcoRI-fragment. This fragment showed strong hybridization to the insert of pMD06.

Figure 2

Restriction enzyme map of a DNA fragment essentially corresponding to the Us region of the HVT genome. The relative position of the insertion-region consisting of four open reading frames and non-coding sequences in between is indicated.

Figure 3

Restriction enzyme map of pVEC04 showing the LTR-promoter inserted into the unique BglII site of the 1,2 kb XhoI HVT fragment from pMD07.

Figure 4

Restriction map of pNDV05. Plasmid contains NDV-HN gene flanked by BamHI sites inserted into BglII site of pVEC04 (see Fig. 3).

Figure 5

Restriction map of pNDV10. Plasmid is derived from pNDV05 by inserting a 0.9 kb EcoRI fragment essentially encoding the MD06 polypeptide at the EcoRI site positioned at about 3200 bases of pNDV05 (see Fig. 4).

Figure 6

Restriction map of pMD58. Plasmid is derived from pVEC04 by insertion of the complete gene encoding antigen MD06 and including non-translated flanking sequences. The gene located on a 1.0 kb BamHI fragment was isolated from pMD23 (see Figure 1) by PCR amplification.

SEQUENCE LISTING

(1) GENERAL INFORMATION:

(i) APPLICANT:

(A) NAME: AKZO N.V.
(B) STREET: Velperweg 76
(C) CITY: Arnhem
(E) COUNTRY: the Netherlands
(F) POSTAL CODE (ZIP): 6824 BM

(ii) TITLE OF INVENTION: Recombinant vaccine against Marek's disease

(iii) NUMBER OF SEQUENCES: 2

(vii) PRIOR APPLICATION DATA:

(A) APPLICATION NUMBER : USSN 07/699,467
(B) FILING DATE : 14-May-1991

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:1:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 975 base pairs
(B) TYPE: nucleic acid
(C) STRANDEDNESS: double
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: DNA (genomic)

(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

(A) ORGANISM: Mareks Disease Virus
(B) STRAIN: Georgia (GA)

(vii) IMMEDIATE SOURCE:

(B) CLONE: pMD11

(ix) FEATURE:

(A) NAME/KEY: CDS
(B) LOCATION: 46..918
(D) OTHER INFORMATION: /label= MD06_antigen

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:1:

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						Met	Glu	Phe									
						1											
5	GAA	GCA	GAA	CAC	GAA	GGG	CTG	ACG	GCG	TCT	TGG	GTC	GCC	CCC	GCT	CCC	102
	Glu	Ala	Glu	His	Glu	Gly	Leu	Thr	Ala	Ser	Trp	Val	Ala	Pro	Ala	Pro	
	5					10					15						
10	CAG	GGT	GGA	AAA	GGG	GCG	GAG	GGC	CGC	GCA	GGG	GTC	GCC	GAC	GAG	GCA	150
	Gln	Gly	Gly	Lys	Gly	Ala	Glu	Gly	Arg	Ala	Gly	Val	Ala	Asp	Glu	Ala	
	20					25					30					35	
	GGG	CAT	GGG	AAA	ACA	GAA	GCG	GAA	TGC	GCC	GAG	GAC	GGC	GAG	AAA	TGC	198
	Gly	His	Gly	Lys	Thr	Glu	Ala	Glu	Cys	Ala	Glu	Asp	Gly	Glu	Lys	Cys	
					40				45						50		
15	GGG	GAC	GCC	GAG	ATG	AGC	GCT	TTG	GAT	CGG	GTC	CAG	AGG	GAC	CGG	TGG	246
	Gly	Asp	Ala	Glu	Met	Ser	Ala	Leu	Asp	Arg	Val	Gln	Arg	Asp	Arg	Trp	
				55					60					65			
20	AGA	TTC	AGT	TCT	CCG	CCC	CCT	CAC	TCT	GGA	GTC	ACG	GGG	AAG	GGG	GCT	294
	Arg	Phe	Ser	Ser	Pro	Pro	Pro	His	Ser	Gly	Val	Thr	Gly	Lys	Gly	Ala	
			70					75					80				
	ATT	CCA	ATA	AAG	GGT	GAT	GGG	AAG	GCG	ATA	GAA	TGC	CAG	GAG	CTA	ACC	342
	Ile	Pro	Ile	Lys	Gly	Asp	Gly	Lys	Ala	Ile	Glu	Cys	Gln	Glu	Leu	Thr	
	85					90						95					
25	GGA	GAG	GGA	GAG	TGG	CTG	TCA	CAG	TGG	GAG	GAG	CTA	CCG	CCT	GAG	CCC	390
	Gly	Glu	Gly	Glu	Trp	Leu	Ser	Gln	Trp	Glu	Glu	Leu	Pro	Pro	Glu	Pro	
	100					105					110					115	
30	CGG	AGG	TCA	GGG	AAT	GAA	CAT	CTT	GAC	GAA	AGT	CGG	TAT	GCG	AAA	CAA	438
	Arg	Arg	Ser	Gly	Asn	Glu	His	Leu	Asp	Glu	Ser	Arg	Tyr	Ala	Lys	Gln	
				120					125						130		
	ACC	GAA	AGG	GGT	AGC	TCT	ACG	GGG	AAA	GAA	GAG	GGA	GAT	GGT	ATG	AAG	486
	Thr	Glu	Arg	Gly	Ser	Ser	Thr	Gly	Lys	Glu	Glu	Gly	Asp	Gly	Met	Lys	
				135					140					145			
35	CAG	ATG	GGG	GAG	CTT	GCC	CAG	CAG	TGC	GAA	GGA	GGA	ACA	TAT	GCG	GAC	534
	Gln	Met	Gly	Glu	Leu	Ala	Gln	Gln	Cys	Glu	Gly	Gly	Thr	Tyr	Ala	Asp	
			150				155						160				
40	TTG	CTT	GTC	GAA	GCA	GAG	CAA	GCT	GTT	GTA	CAT	TCC	GTT	CGC	GCA	TTA	582
	Leu	Leu	Val	Glu	Ala	Glu	Gln	Ala	Val	Val	His	Ser	Val	Arg	Ala	Leu	
		165					170					175					
	ATG	CTG	GCC	GAA	AGA	CAA	AAC	CCA	AAT	ATA	TTG	GGG	GAG	CAT	TTG	AAT	630
	Met	Leu	Ala	Glu	Arg	Gln	Asn	Pro	Asn	Ile	Leu	Gly	Glu	His	Leu	Asn	
	180					185					190					195	
45	AAA	AAA	CGG	GTT	CTT	GTA	CAA	CGA	CCC	CGT	ACT	ATT	CTA	TCC	GTG	GAG	678
	Lys	Lys	Arg	Val	Leu	Val	Gln	Arg	Pro	Arg	Thr	Ile	Leu	Ser	Val	Glu	
				200						205					210		

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	TCA GAG AAT GCA ACA ATG CGT TCT TAT ATG CTG GTT ACA TTG ATA TGT	726
	Ser Glu Asn Ala Thr Met Arg Ser Tyr Met Leu Val Thr Leu Ile Cys	
	215 220 225	
5	TCT GCA AAA TCA TTA TTA CTA GGA TCG TGC ATG TCA TTT TTC GCT GGT	774
	Ser Ala Lys Ser Leu Leu Leu Gly Ser Cys Met Ser Phe Phe Ala Gly	
	230 235 240	
	ATG TTA GTC GGT AGA ACG GCA GAC GTA AAA ACA CCA TTA TGG GAT ACT	822
	Met Leu Val Gly Arg Thr Ala Asp Val Lys Thr Pro Leu Trp Asp Thr	
10	245 250 255	
	GTA TGT TTG TTA ATG GCT TTC TGT GCA GGC ATT GTC GTT GGG GGA GTG	870
	Val Cys Leu Leu Met Ala Phe Cys Ala Gly Ile Val Val Gly Gly Val	
	260 265 270 275	
15	GAT TCT GGG GAG GTG GAA TCT GGA GAA ACA AAA TCT GAA TCA AAT	915
	Asp Ser Gly Glu Val Glu Ser Gly Glu Thr Lys Ser Glu Ser Asn	
	280 285 290	
	TAAATTTAAT ACAGTGTAGC CGTACCCGAC GTTGGAGGCG GAGATTAAGC GAATTCTCAC	975

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(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:2:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

- 5 (A) LENGTH: 290 amino acids
 (B) TYPE: amino acid
 (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: protein

10 (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:2:

Met Glu Phe Glu Ala Glu His Glu Gly Leu Thr Ala Ser Trp Val Ala
 1 5 10 15
 15 Pro Ala Pro Gln Gly Gly Lys Gly Ala Glu Gly Arg Ala Gly Val Ala
 20 20 25 30
 Asp Glu Ala Gly His Gly Lys Thr Glu Ala Glu Cys Ala Glu Asp Gly
 35 40 45
 20 Glu Lys Cys Gly Asp Ala Glu Met Ser Ala Leu Asp Arg Val Gln Arg
 50 55 60
 Asp Arg Trp Arg Phe Ser Ser Pro Pro Pro His Ser Gly Val Thr Gly
 65 70 75 80
 25 Lys Gly Ala Ile Pro Ile Lys Gly Asp Gly Lys Ala Ile Glu Cys Gln
 85 90 95
 Glu Leu Thr Gly Glu Gly Glu Trp Leu Ser Gln Trp Glu Glu Leu Pro
 100 105 110
 30 Pro Glu Pro Arg Arg Ser Gly Asn Glu His Leu Asp Glu Ser Arg Tyr
 115 120 125
 Ala Lys Gln Thr Glu Arg Gly Ser Ser Thr Gly Lys Glu Glu Gly Asp
 130 135 140
 35 Gly Met Lys Gln Met Gly Glu Leu Ala Gln Gln Cys Glu Gly Gly Thr
 145 150 155 160
 Tyr Ala Asp Leu Leu Val Glu Ala Glu Gln Ala Val Val His Ser Val
 40 165 170 175
 Arg Ala Leu Met Leu Ala Glu Arg Gln Asn Pro Asn Ile Leu Gly Glu
 180 185 190
 45 His Leu Asn Lys Lys Arg Val Leu Val Gln Arg Pro Arg Thr Ile Leu
 195 200 205
 Ser Val Glu Ser Glu Asn Ala Thr Met Arg Ser Tyr Met Leu Val Thr
 210 215 220
 50 Leu Ile Cys Ser Ala Lys Ser Leu Leu Leu Gly Ser Cys Met Ser Phe
 225 230 235 240

55

Phe Ala Gly Met Leu Val Gly Arg Thr Ala Asp Val Lys Thr Pro Leu
 245 250 255
 5 Trp Asp Thr Val Cys Leu Leu Met Ala Phe Cys Ala Gly Ile Val Val
 260 265 270
 Gly Gly Val Asp Ser Gly Glu Val Glu Ser Gly Glu Thr Lys Ser Glu
 275 280 285
 10 Ser Asn
 290

15 **Claims**

Claims for the following Contracting States : AT, BE, CH, LI, DE, DK, FR, GB, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE

1. A nucleic acid sequence encoding a polypeptide having one or more immunogenic determinants of a MD06 MDV protein, characterized in that the protein has an amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or is a functional variant thereof.
2. A nucleic acid sequence according to claim 1, characterized in that the nucleic acid sequence contains at least part of the DNA sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:1.
3. A recombinant vector molecule comprising a nucleic acid sequence according to claims 1-2.
4. A recombinant vector molecule according to claim 3, characterized in that the nucleic acid sequence is operably linked to expression control sequences.
5. A recombinant vector virus harbouring the heterologous nucleic acid sequence according to claims 1-2.
6. A host cell transformed with a nucleic acid sequence according to claims 1-2 or with a recombinant vector molecule according to claim 3 or 4, or infected with a recombinant vector virus according to claim 5.
7. A polypeptide having one or more immunogenic determinants of a MD06 MDV protein having an amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a functional variant thereof.
8. A MDV polypeptide encoded by a nucleic acid sequence according to claims 1-2.
9. A process for expressing the polypeptide according to claim 7 or 8 comprising culturing a host cell according to claim 6.
10. An antibody or antiserum immunoreactive with a polypeptide according to claim 7 or 8.
11. A vaccine for the protection of poultry against Marek's disease, characterized in that it comprises a recombinant vector virus according to claim 5, a host cell according to claim 6, a polypeptide according to claim 7 or 8, or a polypeptide prepared by the process according to claim 9, together with an acceptable carrier.
12. An immunochemical reagent comprising a polypeptide according to claim 7 or 8 presenting an immunogenic determinant of MDV for use in an immuno assay.
13. A process for the preparation of a MDV vaccine comprising the steps of culturing an infected host cell according to claim 6, collecting the recombinant vector viruses, and formulating the viral material to a pharmaceutical preparation with immunizing activity.

14. A process for the preparation of a MDV vaccine comprising formulating a polypeptide according to claim 7 or 8 or a polypeptide prepared by the process of claim 9 to a pharmaceutical preparation with immunizing activity.

5 **Claims for the following Contracting States : ES, GR**

1. Process for the production of a nucleic acid sequence encoding a polypeptide having one or more immunogenic determinants of a MD06 MDV protein having an amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2, or a functional variant thereof, by isolating said sequence from a library or by chemical synthesis.
2. Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the nucleic acid sequence contains at least part of the DNA sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:1.
3. Process for the production of a recombinant vector molecule, characterized in that a nucleic acid sequence encoding a polypeptide having one or more immunogenic determinants of a MD06 MDV protein having an amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a functional variant thereof is inserted into a vector nucleic acid molecule.
4. Process according to claim 3, characterized in that the nucleic acid sequence is operably linked to expression control sequences.
5. Process for the production of a recombinant vector virus, characterized in that a nucleic acid sequence encoding a polypeptide having one or more immunogenic determinants of a MD06 MDV protein having an amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a functional variant thereof, is inserted into a vector virus molecule.
6. Process for the production of a polypeptide producing cell, characterized in that a host cell is transformed with a nucleic acid sequence defined in claim 1 or 2 or with a recombinant vector molecule defined in claim 3 or 4, or infected with a recombinant vector virus defined in claim 5.
7. Process for the production of a polypeptide having one or more immunogenic determinants of a MD06 MDV protein having an amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a functional variant thereof, by culturing a host cell transformed with a recombinant vector harbouring a nucleic acid sequence encoding said polypeptide.
8. Process according to claim 7, characterized in that a nucleic acid sequence containing at least part of the DNA sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:1 is used.
9. Process for the production of an antibody or antiserum immunoreactive with a polypeptide defined in claim 7 or 8 by immunizing animals with said polypeptide, optionally collecting spleen cells and fusing them to form hybridomas, and collecting said antibody or antiserum.
10. Process for the production of a vaccine for the protection of poultry against Marek's disease comprising mixing a recombinant vector virus defined in claim 5, by a host cell defined in claim 6, or a polypeptide defined in claim 7 or 8, with an acceptable carrier.
11. Process for the preparation of an immunochemical reagent characterized in that a polypeptide defined in claim 7 or 8 presenting an immunogenic determinant of MDV for use in an immuno assay is bound to a solid support or provided with a labelling substance.
12. A process for the preparation of a MDV vaccine comprising the steps of culturing an infected host cell according to the process of claim 6, collecting the recombinant viruses, and formulating the viral material to a pharmaceutical preparation with immunizing activity.
13. A process for the preparation of a MDV vaccine comprising formulating a polypeptide defined in claim 7 or 8 to a pharmaceutical preparation with immunizing activity.

Patentansprüche

Patentansprüche für folgende Vertragsstaaten : AT, BE, CH, LI, DE, DK, FR, GB, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE

- 5 1. Nukleinsäuresequenz, die für ein Polypeptid codiert, das eine oder mehrere immunogene Determinante eines MD06-MDV-Proteins besitzt, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass das Protein eine Aminosäuresequenz, wie in SEQ ID NO:2 dargestellt, besitzt oder eine funktionelle Variante davon ist.
- 10 2. Nukleinsäuresequenz gemäss Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass die Nukleinsäuresequenz mindestens einen Teil der in SEQ ID NO:1 gezeigten DNA-Sequenz enthält.
3. Rekombinantes Vektormolekül, das eine Nukleinsäuresequenz gemäss Ansprüchen 1-2 umfasst.
- 15 4. Rekombinantes Vektormolekül gemäss Anspruch 3, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass die Nukleinsäuresequenz mit Expressionskontrollsequenzen operabel verbunden ist.
5. Rekombinantes Vektorvirus, das die heterologe Nukleinsäuresequenz gemäss Ansprüchen 1-2 enthält.
- 20 6. Wirtszelle, die mit einer Nukleinsäuresequenz gemäss Ansprüchen 1-2 oder mit einem rekombinanten Vektormolekül gemäss Anspruch 3 oder 4 transformiert ist oder mit einem rekombinanten Vektorvirus gemäss Anspruch 5 infiziert ist.
7. Polypeptid, das eine oder mehrere immunogene Determinante eines MD06-MDV-Proteins besitzt, das eine wie in SEQ ID NO:2 gezeigte Aminosäuresequenz oder eine funktionelle Variante davon besitzt.
- 25 8. MDV-Polypeptid, das von einer Nukleinsäuresequenz gemäss Ansprüchen 1-2 codiert wird.
9. Verfahren zur Expression des Polypeptids gemäss Anspruch 7 oder 8, das das Züchten einer Wirtszelle gemäss Anspruch 6 umfasst.
- 30 10. Antikörper oder Antiserum, dass mit einem Polypeptid gemäss Anspruch 7 oder 8 immunreaktionsfähig ist.
11. Impfstoff zum Schutz von Geflügel gegen die Marek'sche Krankheit, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass er einen rekombinanten Virusvektor gemäss Anspruch 5, eine Wirtszelle gemäss Anspruch 6, ein Polypeptid gemäss Anspruch 7 oder 8 oder ein Polypeptid, das gemäss dem Verfahren von Anspruch 9 hergestellt wurde, zusammen mit einem annehmbaren Träger umfasst.
- 35 12. Immunochemisches Reagens, das ein Polypeptid gemäss Anspruch 7 oder 8 umfasst, das eine immunogene Determinante von MDV zur Verwendung in einem Immunassay umfasst.
- 40 13. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines MDV-Impfstoffes, das die Schritte des Züchtens einer infizierten Wirtszelle gemäss Anspruch 6, Sammeln des rekombinanten Vektorvirus und Verwandeln des viralen Materials in ein pharmazeutisches Präparat mit immunisierender Aktivität umfasst.
- 45 14. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines MDV-Impfstoffes, der das Verwandeln eines Polypeptids gemäss Anspruch 7 oder 8 oder ein Polypeptid, das gemäss dem Verfahren von Anspruch 9 hergestellt wurde, in ein pharmazeutisches Präparat mit immunisierender Aktivität umfasst.

50 **Patentansprüche für folgende Vertragsstaaten : ES, GR**

- 55 1. Verfahren zur Herstellung einer Nukleinsäuresequenz, die für ein Polypeptid codiert, das ein oder mehrere immunogene Determinanten eines MD06-MDV-Proteins hat, welches eine in SEQ ID NO:2 dargestellte Aminosäuresequenz besitzt, oder eine funktionelle Variante davon, durch Isolieren genannter Sequenz aus einer Genbibliothek oder durch chemische Synthese.
2. Verfahren gemäss Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass die Nukleinsäuresequenz mindestens einen Teil der in SEQ ID NO:1 dargestellten Nukleinsäuresequenz enthält.

3. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines rekombinanten Vektormoleküls, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass eine Nukleinsäuresequenz, die für ein Polypeptid codiert, das eine oder mehrere immunogene Determinanten eines MD06-MDV-Proteins besitzt, welches eine in SEQ ID NO:2 dargestellte Aminosäuresequenz hat oder eine funktionelle Variante davon, in ein Nukleinsäuremolekül eines Vektors inseriert wird.
- 5 4. Verfahren gemäss Anspruch 3, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass die Nukleinsäuresequenz mit einer Expressionskontrollsequenz operabel verbunden ist.
- 10 5. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines rekombinanten Vektorvirus, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass eine Nukleinsäuresequenz, die für ein Polypeptid codiert, das ein oder mehrere immunogene Determinante eines MD06-MDV-Proteins besitzt, welches eine in SEQ ID NO:2 dargestellte Aminosäuresequenz hat, oder eine funktionelle Variante davon, in ein Vektorvirusmolekül inseriert wird.
- 15 6. Verfahren zur Herstellung einer ein Polypeptid produzierenden Zelle, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass eine Wirtszelle mit einer wie in Anspruch 1 oder 2 definierten Nukleinsäure-Sequenz oder mit einem wie in Anspruch 3 oder 4 definierten rekombinanten Vektormolekül transformiert wird oder mit einem wie in Anspruch 5 definierten rekombinanten Virus infiziert wird.
- 20 7. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines Polypeptids, das eine oder mehrere immunogene Determinante eines MD06-MDV-Proteins besitzt, welches eine wie in SEQ ID NO:2 dargestellte Aminosäuresequenz hat oder eine funktionelle Variante davon, durch Züchten einer Wirtszelle, die mit einem rekombinanten Vektor transformiert wurde, welcher eine Nukleinsäuresequenz enthält, die für genanntes Polypeptid codiert.
- 25 8. Verfahren gemäss Anspruch 7, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass eine Nukleinsäuresequenz, die mindestens einen Teil der in SEQ ID NO:1 dargestellten DNA-Sequenz enthält, verwendet wird.
- 30 9. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines Antikörpers oder Antiserums, das mit einem in Anspruch 7 oder 8 definierten Polypeptid immunreaktionsfähig ist, durch Immunisieren von Tieren mit genanntem Polypeptid, gegebenenfalls Sammeln und Fusionieren von Milzzellen um Hybridomas zu bilden und Sammeln des genannten Antikörpers oder Antiserums.
- 35 10. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines Impfstoffes zum Schutz von Geflügel gegen die Marek'sche Krankheit, das Mischen eines wie in Anspruch 5 definierten rekombinanten Vektorvirus, einer wie in Anspruch 6 definierten Wirtszelle oder einem wie in Anspruch 7 oder 8 definierten Polypeptid mit einem annehmbaren Träger umfasst.
- 40 11. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines immunochemischen Reagenz, dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass ein wie in Anspruch 7 oder 8 definiertes Polypeptid, das eine immunogene Determinante von MDV darstellt, an einen festen Träger gebunden wird oder mit einer markierenden Substanz ausgestattet wird.
- 45 12. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines MDV-Impfstoffes, das die Schritte des Züchtens einer gemäss dem Verfahren von Anspruch 6 infizierten Wirtszelle umfasst, Sammeln des rekombinanten Virus und Verwandeln des viralen Materials in ein pharmazeutisches Präparat mit immunisierender Aktivität.
13. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines MDV-Impfstoffes, der das Verwandeln eines wie in Anspruch 7 oder 8 definierten Polypeptids in ein pharmazeutisches Präparat mit immunisierende Aktivität umfasst.

Revendications

50 **Revendications pour les Etats contractants suivants : AT, BE, CH, LI, DE, DK, FR, GB, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE**

- 55 1. Une séquence d'acide nucléique codant pour un polypeptide comportant un ou plusieurs déterminants immunogènes d'une protéine MD06 de MDV, caractérisée en ce que la protéine comporte une séquence d'acides aminés représentée dans SEQ ID N°2, ou correspond à un variant fonctionnel en dérivant.

2. Une séquence d'acide nucléique selon la revendication 1, caractérisée en ce que la séquence d'acide nucléique contient au moins une partie de la séquence d'ADN représentée dans SEQ ID N° 1.
3. Une molécule de vecteur recombinant, comprenant une séquence d'acide nucléique selon les revendications 1 à 2.
4. Une molécule de vecteur recombinant selon la revendication 3, caractérisée en ce que la séquence d'acide nucléique est liée de façon fonctionnelle à des séquences de contrôle de l'expression.
5. Un virus vecteur recombinant véhiculant la séquence d'acide nucléique hétérologue selon les revendications 1 à 2.
6. Une cellule hôte transformée par une séquence d'acide nucléique définie dans la revendication 1 ou 2 ou par une molécule de vecteur recombinant selon la revendication 3 ou 4, ou infectée par un virus vecteur recombinant selon la revendication 5.
7. Un polypeptide comportant un ou plusieurs déterminants immunogènes d'une protéine MD06 de MDV comportant une séquence d'acides aminés représentée dans SEQ ID N° 2 ou un variant fonctionnel en dérivant.
8. Un polypeptide de MDV codé par une séquence d'acide nucléique selon les revendications 1 à 2.
9. Un procédé d'expression du polypeptide selon la revendication 7 ou 8 comprenant la culture d'une cellule hôte selon la revendication 6.
10. Un anticorps ou un anti-sérum réagissant immunologiquement avec un polypeptide selon la revendication 7 ou 8.
11. Un vaccin pour la protection des volailles contre la maladie de Marek, caractérisé en ce qu'il comprend un virus vecteur recombinant selon la revendication 5, une cellule hôte selon la revendication 6, un polypeptide selon la revendication 7 ou 8, ou un polypeptide préparé par le procédé selon la revendication 9, et un support acceptable.
12. Un réactif immunochimique comprenant un polypeptide selon la revendication 7 ou 8 présentant un déterminant immunogène de MDV pour une utilisation dans un test immunologique.
13. Un procédé de préparation d'un vaccin contre MDV comprenant les étapes de culture d'une cellule hôte infectée selon la revendication 6, la récupération des virus vecteurs recombinants, et la formulation du matériel viral en une préparation pharmaceutique présentant une activité immunisante.
14. Un procédé de préparation d'un vaccin contre MDV comprenant la formulation d'un polypeptide selon la revendication 7 ou 8 ou d'un polypeptide préparé par le procédé selon la revendication 9 en une préparation pharmaceutique présentant une activité immunisante.

Revendications pour les Etats contractants suivants : ES, GR

1. Procédé de production d'une séquence d'acide nucléique codant pour un polypeptide comportant un ou plusieurs déterminants immunogènes d'une protéine MD06 de MDV comportant une séquence d'acides aminés représentée dans SEQ ID N° 2, ou un variant fonctionnel en dérivant, par isolement de ladite séquence à partir d'une banque ou par synthèse chimique.
2. Procédé selon la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que la séquence d'acide nucléique contient au moins une partie de la séquence d'ADN représentée dans SEQ ID N° 1.
3. Procédé de production d'une molécule de vecteur recombinant, caractérisé en ce qu'une séquence d'acide nucléique codant pour un polypeptide comportant un ou plusieurs déterminants immunogènes d'une protéine MD06 de MDV comportant une séquence d'acides aminés représentée dans SEQ ID N° 2, ou un variant fonctionnel en dérivant, est insérée dans une molécule d'acide nucléique vecteur.

4. Procédé selon la revendication 3, caractérisé en ce que la séquence d'acide nucléique est liée de façon fonctionnelle à des séquences de contrôle de l'expression.
5. Procédé de production d'un virus vecteur recombinant, caractérisé en ce qu'une séquence d'acide nucléique codant pour un polypeptide comportant un ou plusieurs déterminants immunogènes d'une protéine MD06 de MDV comportant une séquence d'acides aminés représentée dans SEQ ID N° 2, ou un variant fonctionnel en dérivant, est insérée dans une molécule de virus vecteur.
6. Procédé de production d'une cellule produisant un polypeptide, caractérisé en ce qu'une cellule hôte est transformée par une séquence d'acide nucléique définie dans la revendication 1 ou 2 ou par une molécule de vecteur recombinant définie dans la revendication 3 ou 4 ou infectée par un virus vecteur recombinant défini dans la revendication 5.
7. Procédé de production d'un polypeptide comportant un ou plusieurs déterminants immunogènes d'une protéine MD06 de MDV comportant une séquence d'acides aminés représentée dans SEQ ID N° 2 ou un variant fonctionnel en dérivant, par culture d'une cellule hôte transformée par un vecteur recombinant véhiculant la séquence d'acide nucléique codant pour ledit polypeptide.
8. Procédé selon la revendication 7, caractérisé en ce qu'une séquence d'acide nucléique contenant au moins une partie de la séquence d'ADN représentée dans SEQ ID N° 1 est utilisée.
9. Procédé de production d'un anticorps ou d'un anti-sérum réagissant immunologiquement avec un polypeptide défini dans la revendication 7 ou 8 par immunisation d'animaux avec ledit polypeptide, éventuellement récupération des cellules de la rate et fusion de ces dernières pour former des hybridomes, et récupération desdits anticorps ou dudit anti-sérum.
10. Procédé de production d'un vaccin pour la protection des volailles contre la maladie de Marek comprenant le mélange d'un virus vecteur recombinant défini dans la revendication 5, d'une cellule hôte définie dans la revendication 6, ou d'un polypeptide défini dans la revendication 7 ou 8, avec un support acceptable.
11. Procédé de préparation d'un réactif immunochimique, caractérisé en ce qu'un polypeptide défini dans la revendication 7 ou 8 présentant un déterminant immunogène de MDV pour une utilisation dans un test immunologique est lié à un support solide ou pourvu d'un marqueur.
12. Un procédé de préparation d'un vaccin contre MDV comprenant les étapes de culture d'une cellule hôte infectée selon le procédé de la revendication 6, la récupération des virus recombinants, et la formulation du matériel viral en une préparation pharmaceutique présentant une activité immunisante.
13. Un procédé de préparation d'un vaccin contre MDV comprenant la formulation d'un polypeptide défini dans la revendication 7 ou 8 en une préparation pharmaceutique présentant une activité immunisante.

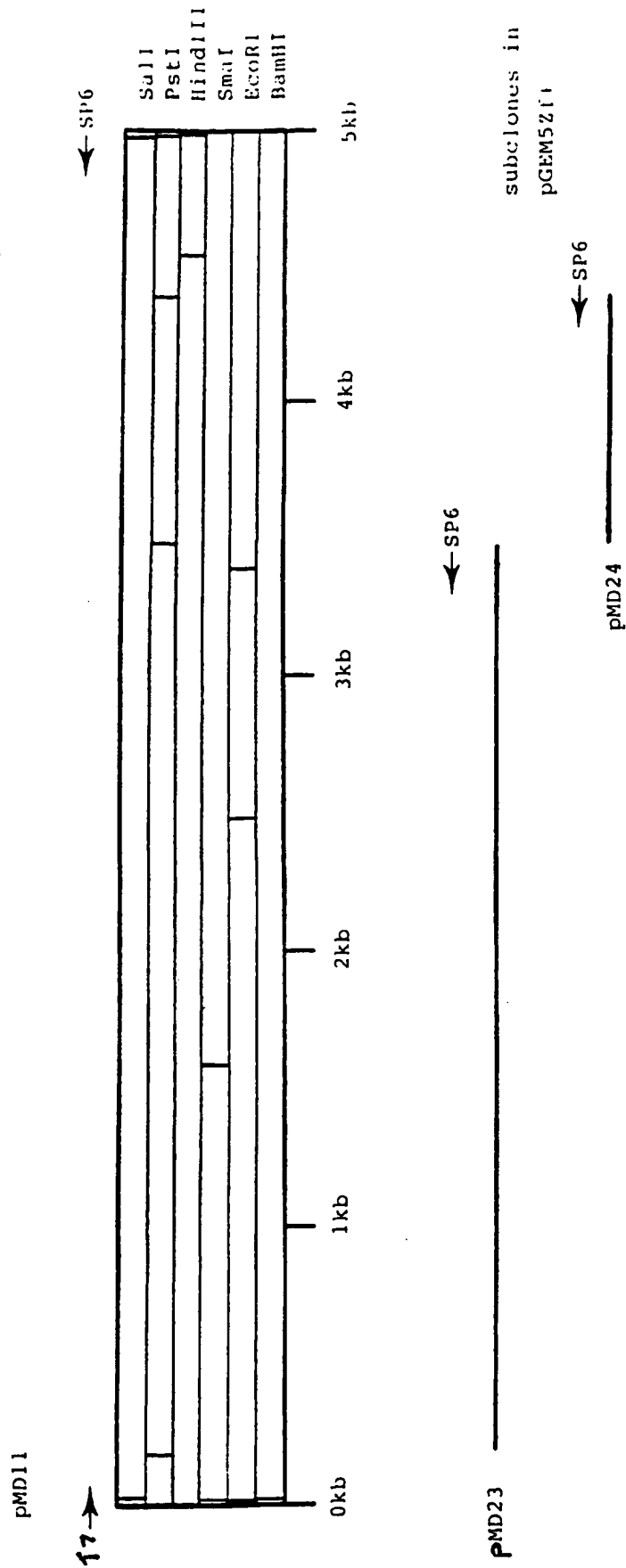
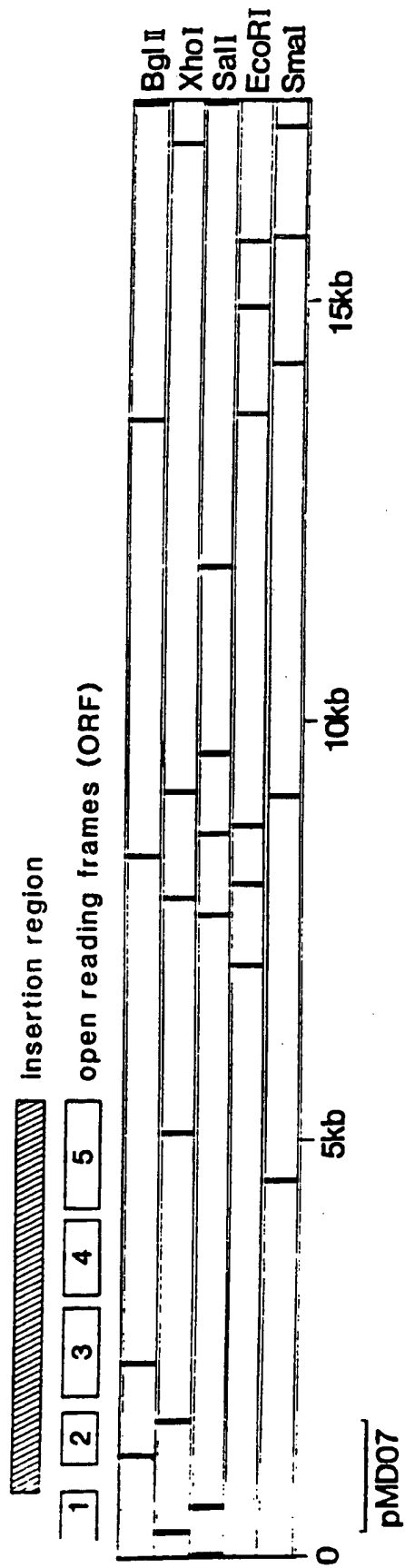


Fig 1

Fig 2



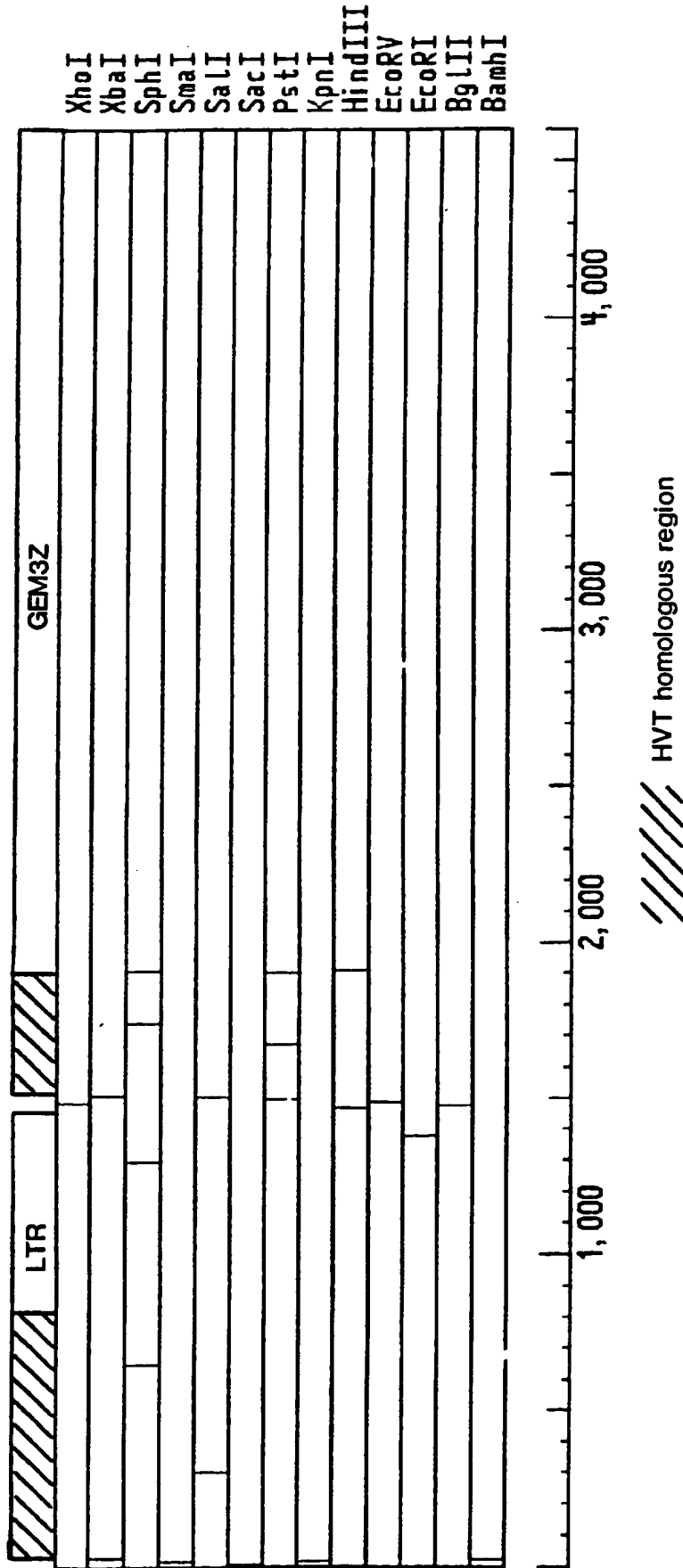


Fig. 3

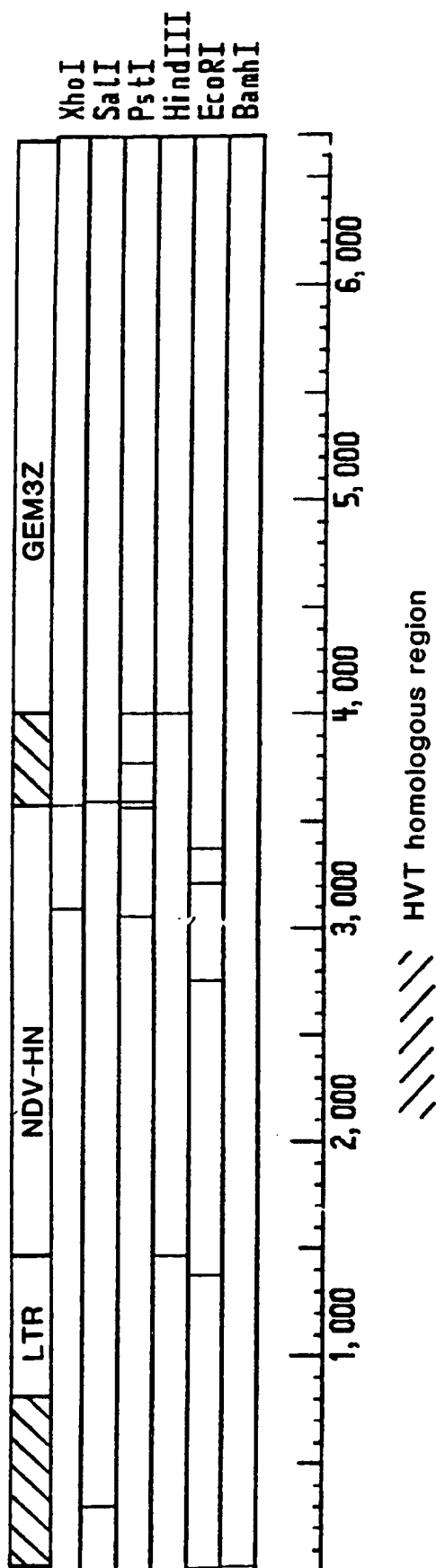
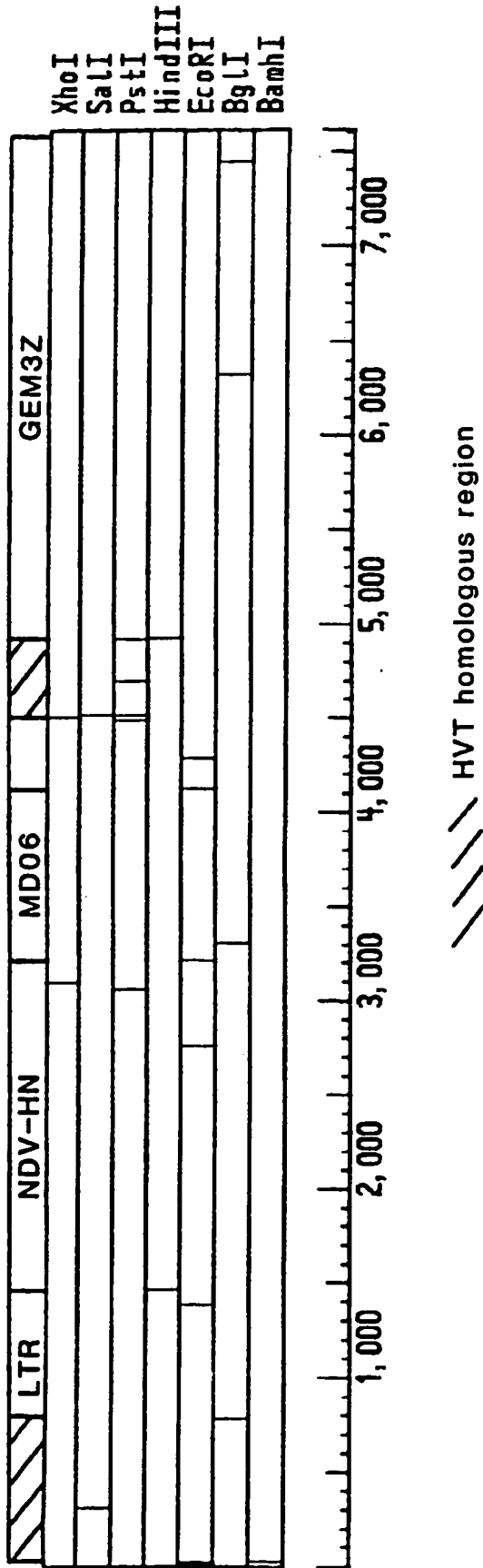


Fig 4

Fig 5



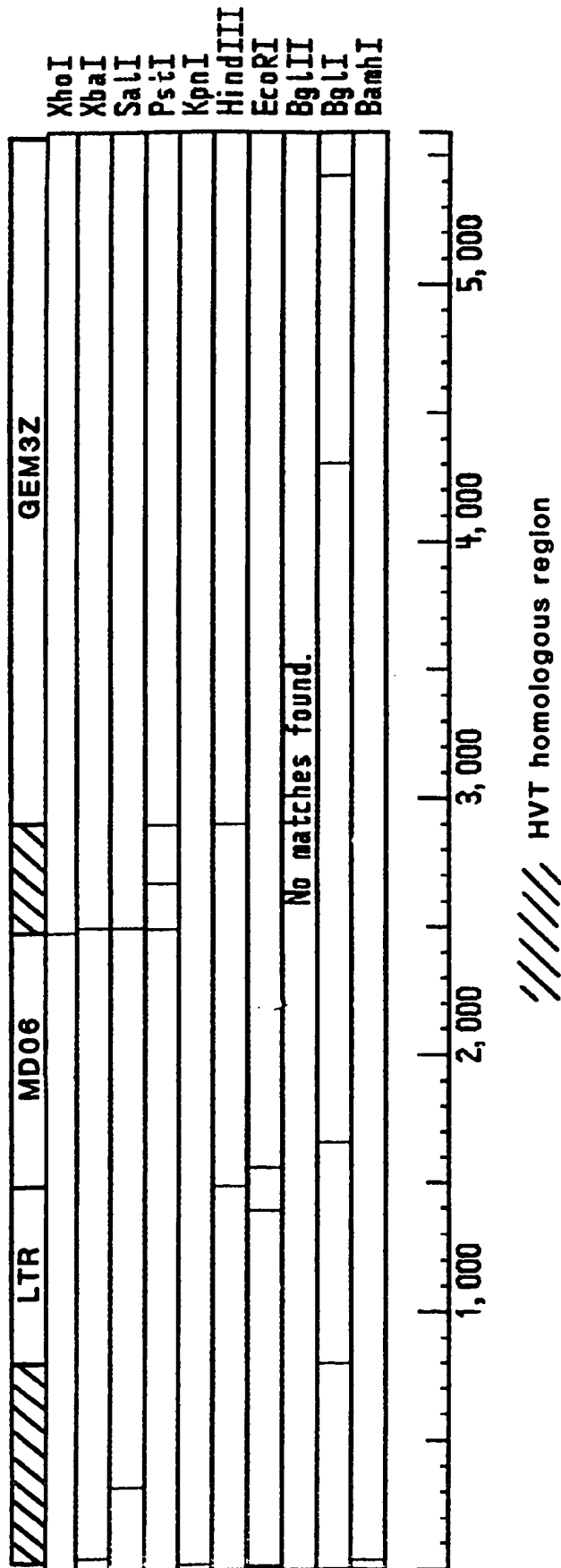


Fig 6